

The Senator has good

cause for being riled

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North Carolina's Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. got riled again. And again there will be a lot of people who won't understand why.

From Washington it was reported that the Senator was red-faced, and editorialized that he was furious, because, as he saw it, the Central Intelligence Agency thinks it has a right to "stand above the law."

The Senator does not want the secret CIA organization to have the power to ask employees and applicants for employment about such personal matters as family relationships, religious beliefs, and sex habits.

And he resented the CIA's maneuvering in legislative places to win elimination of his bill which would safeguard people from such invasions.

Further, the Senator left no doubt that he considers the CIA is not only overstepping proper procedure and denying personal rights, but also is acting illegally by lobbying as a federal agency on pending legislation.

"They want the unmitigated right to kick federal employees around and deny them the basic rights which belong to every American," Senator Ervin charged. That is strong language for the usually cautious man. And it is forceful language, considering that he is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee which is supposed to have jurisdiction over the CIA.

There is really no cause for failing to understand the Senator's attitude. It is the same attitude which has governed his words and actions in many other matters.

Senator Ervin understands perfectly well that the CIA and the National Security Agency—or some agencies by whatever names—have a vitally important job to do.

As long as nations of people build fences around themselves and regard those on the outside as foreign and potential enemies, there

will continue to be a need for what used to be called spying and counterespionage.

Both demand more than a little secrecy and a great deal of security within themselves.

Neither can ever be completely achieved. For that reason security agencies are always prone to push harder and harder for additional tools and additional powers.

In that, they are no different from any other close-knit pressure group. And, like every other pressure group, they come to a point where benefits gained have so diminished that they are not worth the cost.

That point comes very early when the cost is in terms of the individual person's rights. When those rights are lost, whatever security agency we have, it is no better than its counterpart in Moscow or pre-war Germany. We shall have spent our real treasure trying to protect it.

All this Senator Ervin knows.

And all this is only a part of why he has appeared over and over again struggling for recognition of the person first. It happens that Senator Ervin is an American. He finds the case for the individual extraordinarily well said in the Constitution. So that is where he makes his stand.

If he were an Englishman, he would make the same fight, taking his stand on whatever basic statement of rights he found in the law.

So he rises to the cause of the individual. He knows that every time a pressure group wins for itself, whatever the excuse or justification, every individual man loses.

In short, human rights have to take precedence over all. And those rights are the property of individual men and women, not of clubs, associations, unions, races, or government agencies.

Senator Ervin is usually called a conservative. The fact is, he is the most liberal of all the conservatives one could find.

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